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From: Stickney, Matt <Matt.Stickney@pmo-cpm.gc.ca>
Sent: 2020-03-31 8:52 AM
To: Saini, Sabina (HC/SC)
Cc: Nowers, Kathryn (HC/SC); Church, Leslie (SPAC/PSPC)
Subject: FW: May want to check into this

This on anyones radar? Katie flagged.

From: Telford, Katie
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A Montreal firm says it has access to “hundreds of thousands of masks”

by: Audrey Ruel-manseau

A Montreal firm says it has access to a large quantity of N95 masks, in China, and says it can obtain them in a few days. PixMob says it is awaiting the green light from Health Canada to make the product available and hopes to be able to supply Quebec healthcare personnel “before they have to start disinfecting masks.”

“We are trying to put our hands up and we are saying: ‘We can get our hands on hundreds of thousands of masks, even a million. ... We can get them quickly. Not at the end of the month, at the end of the week!’” claims Simon St-Germain, marketing director at PixMob.

PixMob is a very new player in the healthcare sector. The company, which specializes in entertainment, makes glow bracelets that are used at large-scale events: Super Bowl LIV and Taylor Swift’s or Shawn Mendes’ world tour, for example. Its spokesperson says that the company started to feel the impact of COVID-19 in February and is looking for ways to reinvent itself.

“Our bracelets are made in China and we have access to Chinese suppliers. They have told us that masks were available, because everyone has turned around there and started making N95 masks,” Mr. St-Germain explained.

“But because they are new players, the distributors here in Quebec are not doing business with them. They are doing business with traditional suppliers, who are the same for everyone on the planet and are not able to meet the demand.”

- Simon St-Germain, marketing director at PixMob

All new medical products must be approved by Health Canada before being imported and marketed. The approval request was completed and sent on Monday.

“Health Canada is fast-tracking the application process for establishment licences for companies that want to manufacture, import or distribute class I masks, states the Health Canada website. Our goal is to complete the process within 24 hours from the time we receive a completed application.”

Ottawa did not respond to specific questions from *La Presse* concerning the PixMob case.

Interest in Quebec?

The availability of masks has raised numerous questions since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, workers in the healthcare system have been sounding the alarm about the limited number of masks they have access to – see the previous tab. On the other hand, the government wants to be reassuring and keeps saying that there is a sufficient quantity of protective equipment. On Monday, the tone changed significantly.

Premier François Legault has said: “We are also seeing whether N95 masks can be reused several times after being disinfected.”

If PixMob obtains Health Canada authorization, the masks will still have to be brought here. Maritime shipping is too slow for the urgency of the situation, and so the company would opt for air transport – a higher-priced option, that could be considered only with a full order book. Could Quebec be a potential customer?

“This company, like all the others, can submit its service offer to the Ministère, and it will be rigorously analyzed.”

- Nicolas Vigneault, communications director at the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

For the moment, “the Ministère has already called on its partners, like the education system and even certain private clinics [dental and others], to support the system’s needs,” Mr. Vigneault said.

Mr. Legault also suggested on Monday that the government “is in advanced discussions with a number of Quebec companies [that are working night and day] to make masks, gowns and gloves.”

In two or three weeks, if Quebec masks are being produced here, so much the better, says Mr. St-Germain. But the important thing is to protect our people, and we have to act before we need to start disinfecting masks.”

The company is also getting into manufacturing visors, and has marketed smart bracelets that remind people to wash their hands. The SafeWatch bracelet is equipped with LED lights that light up red at a predetermined frequency. During handwashing, the light turns yellow for 20 seconds, and then goes back to green when washing has been done properly. Private pharmacies have ordered bracelets for their employees and PixMob says it is in talks with big grocery chains.

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